



## SUCCESS STORY

# New Skills Make a Difference

### **USAID alumni creates a new service for disabled and their families**



Ms. Byashimova, together with local youths, at the Turkmenbashi Informational Resource Center.

Photo: Community Connections

Turkmen community activist Olga Byashimova has recently created a new service for the disabled of her hometown: an Informational Resource Center for the Disabled in Turkmenbashi City. The center provides the disabled and their family members with access to information, computers, and the internet, and arranges educational opportunities.

The idea to create such center came to Ms. Byashimova during her 3-week internship in the U.S., organized by USAID in 2006. While interacting with her U.S. colleagues and visiting numerous community organizations, Ms. Byashimova designed a plan to reach out to this under-served community in her country. Ms. Byashimova had been working with the disabled since 1998, and was aware that this group of population lacks opportunities and services.

Upon return from the study tour, Olga Byashimova immediately set out to apply her new skills and experience. Together with her colleagues, Ms.

Byashimova she identified that technology and education are the top services desired by the disabled and their families in her town. Ms. Byashimova and her colleagues secured a grant from the British Embassy and arranged with the Training and Production Enterprise at the Turkmen Union of the the Deaf and Dumb of Turkmenbashi City to support center's work.

The resource center is operated by volunteers who help the disabled and their family members to work with computers and research various information. The volunteers also organize trainings for small groups of participants on information and communication technologies using center's computers and other equipment. In addition to the trainings, Ms. Byashimova and her colleagues organize social events, discussions, and round tables to inform the public about issues related to the disabled.

Ms. Byashimova is happy that the skills she gained during the study to in the U.S. have helped bring better opportunities for the disadvantaged residents of her town. "Our world was created for everybody regardless of abilities, social status, and income," says Olga Byashimova.

***A USAID-sponsored study tour inspires a Turkmen community activist to open an Internet Resource Center for the disabled and their families in her town.***